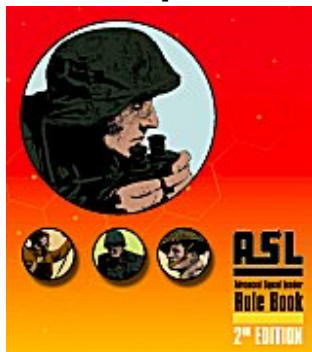


CROSSFIRE

Special Issue

Summer 2001

AGS Report from HQ - Bruce Probst



Army Group South is moving into a more stable position now that we have incorporated, found ourselves a venue that it seems everyone likes, and organised better planning than our previous "let's just see what happens now" approach. Our new venue, the Ashburton Library, is terrific. So terrific that we've decided to use it as the venue for next year's ANZACcon.

There's still more to do, though. Mostly, we need more people regularly attending the meetings! They're only once a month, and it's a chance to play ASL with folk who you may not regularly play against -- which hones *everyone's* skills. There's not much point in being in a club if you don't *participate*. So come along and join the fun!

Grand Poobah signing out.

AGS Staff Officer's Report - Neil Andrews

Well G'day All

I would like to take the opportunity as our little group's secretary to welcome you to the revived "Crossfire". Under the sterling combined leadership of Chris Harding and Joe Moro, I am sure that the plans for this little organ of communication are to continue and expand, to provide us with information about our little hobby here in Melbourne. But as I am sure that Chris may have mentioned elsewhere, it is all up to you. We will need a constant source of information, articles and ideas to go into this 'Zine. And on the same basis we need to have a constant source of ideas on how you want the group to continue to function, prosper and expand. If you have an idea that you would like us to adopt, Let someone in the committee (Grand Poobah - Bruce, Sec Neil, or (no title yet provided) Steve, know about it. We might not be able to do it all the time, or maybe not until later. But either way we have to have some input from you all or we are just going to be working in a vacuum with no idea if we are doing the right thing.

And the last thing for now is about me starting to get heavy with those who have not yet made themselves financial. You know who you are, and it's now time for you to send us the small amount to be a member. For a long time now we have been fortunate that to be a member of AGS was basically free. It wasn't of course. We had to pay to belong to DWARF and for the hire of the school when we went there. And above and beyond that was the cost of the hall for ANZACcon. And after we stopped going to the school on a regular basis, for all of you (except me!!!) there was the associated transport costs of making your way out to Boronia.

Now we found a fantastic new location. As close to all of you as we could make it. And it is dirt cheap for what we get. For those of you who have been along to the Ashburton library, You would agree with me in saying that the facilities are excellent. It's even heated, so those rotten scoundrels from Sydney would have nothing to complain about either. I will be soon getting ready to collect some more money from you all for next year. Now I need to have you all up to date for this year

So I hope to see you all soon, playing some ASL

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AGS Signals Officer's Report - Chris Harding

Welcome to the latest "Crossfire" magazine, the first for awhile, but hopefully there are many more to come. As you will have noticed, this is the 'Special Edition' and is the only one we have planned for 2001. Our intention, with a little help from our friends, is to publish 5 times next year, with a tentative schedule of March, May, July, September and November. The issues should be ready for the Club meeting held in each of those months, namely the first Friday of the month.

The deadline for submissions for each issue is the Friday proceeding; this gives us time to do the final paste up of the magazine. Now then who is 'us' well that would be Joe Moro and myself, and who would be providing us with submissions? Well that would be (insert your name here)... After all this is foremost an ASL magazine for AGS members. What is suitable, well if its ASL or ASL related, (Articles on WWII) then at least send it in, and I'll let you know if it's suitable.



I would like to thank those of you who have already provided material for this and subsequent issues. How are we going to distribute the 'zine, well there are plans to do three things. First there will be a limited print run of 'hard copies' less than 15, secondly there will be copies e-mailed out to members, and finally we have had a couple of offers to host the 'zine on some website. We will publish the URL's for the website once we see them up and running. So that's the cunning plan, lets see how everything goes and hopefully you enjoy this issue.

AGS Dispatches from the Frontline - Bruce Probst

October Club Meeting

Two scenarios were on offer, but in the event everyone who played chose the same one:

Scenario: PBP 18 Pandemonium

Jap vs. Brit

Bruce v. Gordon (Jap win)

Steve v. Jamie (Jap win)

Geoff v. Phil (Jap win)

Conclusion: very very hard on the Brits! (The ROAR record supports this.) Cries of "Paddington Bear rubbish" were heard (the PBs don't read this, do they? <g>)[Ed. I hope someone reads it] The closest result was in Steve's and Jamie's game, where Jamie came oh so close ... but not close enough.

This was the "beginner" scenario. The "expert" scenario (that no one played) was "Late For Pudding", from CanCon 95.

Andrew Rogers, just to be different, wanted to play something that he hadn't played before, so he picked:

HG 3 Bumps Along The Tiddam Road,

Jap vs. Gurkha

Andrew v. Dave (Gurkha win)

Also, Joe Moro, Mick Jones and Darryn Webster turned up, but didn't play.

An Italian Story - by Joe Moro

Any ASL enthusiast with some interest in the Italians participation in WWII, is aware of the criticism and distaste that colour any discussion about the participation and efforts of the Italian soldier in WWII. It seems that when it comes to examining Anglo-American reports of how the Italian soldier fought during WWII, the old adage 'history belongs to winners' is very appropriate.

This is not say that some of these criticisms are unwarranted. With a military leadership incapable of conducting (or even contemplating) a modern conflict, a reliance on obsolete and often inadequate equipment, the inability to create effective fighting units due to deficient and limited training, the only rewards for the common Italian soldier were disaster and defeat.

However heroism and devotion to duty were not foreign notions in the Italian Army. This is the account of one episode where devotion to duty and sacrifice is made more poignant by the circumstances in which it happened.

The 8th September 1943 (Italy's surrender to the Allied forces) is seen by many historians as the darkest, most tragic day in the history of the Italian Armed Forces. Even today nearly 60 years after it happened, with countless books published in Italy, it is still one of most argued about episode in Italian history.



Ariete Divisional Emblem

For the Italian Army this episode has particular resonance: 600,000 Italian soldiers ended up in German concentration camps mainly due to the rapid disintegration of the command structures in Italy, the Balkans and France. This can only be characterised as a complete failure of the Italian High Command and is seen by many as the most controversial event in the history of the Italian Armed Forces.

In Italy most army units, and without orders, simply dissolved as the men threw away their uniform and equipment, left their posts and headed for home. But not all, as some officers and men, decided to remain at their posts and in many instances contested the German occupation of the country. One of these men was Ettore Rosso.

Ettore Rosso was born in 1920 and Italy's entry into the war found him at a technical college. Rosso soon volunteered and his technical background meant that after his basic training he ended up with the 3rd Regt Genio (Engineers). After further training (and promoted to sergente) he was sent to Slovenia attached to IV Battaglione Telegrafisti. This was a garrison unit tasked with securing the communication network of the occupying Italian Army.

By all accounts he was a very capable NCO and his leadership qualities were quickly rewarded. After completing the Corso per Ufficiali di Complemento del Genio (officer training in the Corps of Engineers) the newly promoted Sottotenente (2nd Lieut.) was sent to the CXXXIV Battaglione Genio attached to the reforming Divisione di Corazzata Ariete (Ariete Armoured Div.). The Ariete, with the Centauro Armoured Division and the Divisione motorizzata Piave (Piave Motorized Div) constituted the Corpo D'Armata Motocorazzato (Armoured Army Corps or CAM). The CAM was one of two newly established army corps charged with the defence of the Italian capital. When the armistice was announced, the Ariete Div. was refitting at its depots north of Rome. It was directly in the path of the 3rd Panzergrenadier Div., whose orders were to secure Rome before moving towards the Allied beachheads at Salerno.

The Divisional commander of the Ariete promptly established a defensive role for his unit and decided that the Germans' movements had to be contested. A plan was devised whereby three major defensive positions were established on the two ancient roman roads that lead into Rome from the north. One of these strongholds was on the Cassius road at Monterosi, a small town at the bottom of a valley surrounded by hills, farms and vineyards.

On the morning of the 9th September, Sottotenente Rossi and his platoon of engineers were ordered to mine the main road a few hundred meters in front of the Italian positions at Monterosi. As he began laying the first mines, a Kampfgruppe of the 3rd Pzgr Div made up of around thirty self-propelled guns (StuG's) and a number of SPW halftracks (carrying 2 battalions of infantry) arrived on the scene.

When Rossi became aware of the fast approaching German column, he ordered his two trucks carrying mines and explosives to be positioned across the carriageway, blocking the road to the approaching Germans. The German commander of the column ordered the Italians to immediately clear the roadblock. Rossi refused. The Germans issued an ultimatum: they would open fire in 15 minutes unless the Italians removed the trucks and cleared the roadblock. Rossi ordered all of his men back to the safety of the main Italian positions located a few hundreds meters to the rear, (except for four volunteers who remained behind with him).

As the Germans begun advancing, covered by tank and machine gun fire, Rossi lit the fuses (prepared and set during the fifteen minute lull) attached to the mines and explosives located inside the two trucks. The tremendous explosion killed Rossi and the four volunteers, destroying a number of German vehicles and killing a number of officers and men and stunning the rest of the column. For their supreme sacrifice, Rossi and his four companions were awarded Italy's highest decoration for valour, the Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare

After this unexpected Italian action, unlike the behaviour of most Italian troops they had encountered until this point, the panzergranadiers retreated in an attempt to re-organize. When two hours later the panzergranadiers recommenced their advance; the Italian main position at Monterosi was ready to receive them. The men of the Cavalleggeri di Luca Rgt (one of the Ariete's three armoured Regts mounting their newly acquired M15-42 medium tank) manned this main line of defence. They were supported by the III Gruppo (3rd battery) of the 135th Reggimento Artiglieria based around the new obici (howitzer) 149/15 and the CXXXIV Battaglione Genio (Rossi's unit)

That day the Italian positions repulsed a number of German attacks. By the end of the day the Italian losses amounted to around 20 men killed and approx. 50 wounded plus four tanks destroyed. The Germans suffered a similar number of casualties plus a number of armoured vehicles went up in flames.

At the same time in the southern suburbs of Rome, the officers and men of the Granatieri di Sardegna Regt were heavily engaged against the paras of the 2nd Fallschirmjager. It is in these dire circumstances that 12 Medaglie d'Oro al Valor Military were awarded to the officers and men who stood at their post to defend the Italian capital between 9-10 Sep 1943. As a result of these actions, there is no doubt that the delayed deployment of the 3rd PzGr and 2nd Fallschirmjager at Salerno, due to the stronger than expected Italian resistance, saved countless American & English lives.

(is there a scenario in all this? Ed)



ITALIAN M(edium)15-42 TANK

What's In a Name - by Neil Andrews

As we are all quite aware, ASL is made for our enjoyment by a bunch of Yanks. Now for some reason known only to Americans, sometime after 1776, they decided that, for all intensive purposes that they still desired to use the English language as their primary written and spoken language. Now of course, we also know they can't spell properly either (neither can I at times). Dropping inconvenient "U's" and other vowel's when they seemed inconvenient. I have always just put it down to them being lazy, but maybe it was to show that the U.S.A. is independent in more than just a political sense.

To us, as ASL wargamer's and historians the most obvious example is the way the Americans spell "Armor". The rest of the English speaking world spells it "Armour". But that is only small peanuts compared to the rest of the world. What do I mean by that, you ask?

MMP have produced hundreds of scenarios over the years. These scenarios have covered the conflicts of man over 5 continents, with 20 odd different nationalities involved. And it has evolved not only to cover the main conflict, the Second World War. But also, numerous smaller conflicts that top and tailed that greatest of conflicts. But all of these scenarios share a common flaw. They are all formatted in THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, regardless of whether the English language is used at all. In this I refer mainly to the unit designations, nomenclature and the format that is used. And sometimes location names too (But I will leave that for another time and place – bad pun intended).

So what is the point? I have conducted a lot of research over the last few years. Some of it in books, some of it from film, and a fair bit from people with better language skills. This research has lead me to the following: So exactly how do the Soviets and others write "Infantry Division", and Regiment, and Battalion and ...

France/Belgium

Corps d'Armee d'Infanterie (Infantry Corps)
Division d'Infanterie (Infantry Division)
Regiment d'Infanterie (Infantry Regiment)

Finnish

Jaakaridivisioona (Jaeger Division)
Jaakarikomppania (Jaeger Company)
Jaakaripataljoona (Jaeger Battalion)
Jaakariprikaati (Jaeger Brigade)
Jalkavkidivisioona (Infantry Division)
Jalkavkikomppania (Infantry Company)
Jalkavkipataljoona (Infantry Battalion)
Jalkavkirykmentti (Infantry Regiment)

German

Armee (Standard Infantry Army)
Infanterieregiment (Infantry Regiment)
Infanteriedivision (Infantry Division)
Heeresgruppe (Army Group)
Armeekorps (Standard Infantry Corps)

Italian

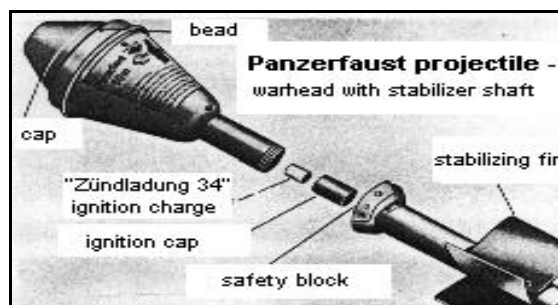
"(Name)" Divisione Fanteria ("Name of Division" Infantry Division)
Reggimento Fanteria (Infantry Regiment)
Brigata Fanteria (Infantry Brigade)
Corpo di Truppe Volontarie CTV (Italian Volunteer Corps – in Spanish Civil War)
Corpo Spedizione Italiano in Russia (Italian Expeditionary Corps in Russia)
Forza Armate Italiana # (Army)

Japanese

Hohei Butai (Infantry Force)
Dokubitsu Konsei Rentai (Mixed Independent Regiment)
Dokubitsu Konsei Ryodan (Mixed Independent Brigade)
Hohei Gundan (Infantry Corps)
Hohei Homengun (Infantry Area Army)
Hohei Rentai (Infantry Regiment)
Hohei Rikugun (Infantry Army)
Hohei Ryodan (Infantry Brigade)
Hohei Shidan (Infantry Division)

Polish

Dywizja Piechoty DPty (Infantry Division)



Russian

Vintovka Armya (Rifle Army)
Vintovka Brigada (Rifle Brigade)
Vintovka Divizeya (Rifle Division)
Vintovka Korpus (Rifle Corps)
Vintovka Polk (Rifle Regiment)
Gvardyeiskii Vintovka Armya (Guard Rifle Army)
Gvardyeiskii Vintovka Brigada (Guard Rifle Brigade)
Gvardyeiskii Vintovka Divizeya (Guard Rifle Division)
Gvardyeiskii Vintovka Korpus (Guard Rifle Corps)
Gvardyeiskii Vintovka Polk (Guard Rifle Regiment)
the Soviets and others write "Infantry Division", and Regiment, and Battalion and

Vintovka (Rifle) ---- Note there is NO such thing as an infantry unit in the WW2 Red Army, They were all designated as Rifle

Spanish

Brigada Internatinalia (Republican International Brigade – Spanish Civil War)
Brigada Mixta (Republican Mixed Brigade – Spanish Civil War)
Compania (Company)
Regimiento de Infanteria (Infantry Regiment)
Tabor de Infanteria (Infantry Half Battalion – Spanish Civil War)
Tercio de Infanteria (Infantry Regiment – Spanish Civil War)

So next time you want to show off a little, drop the line ".units of the 234. Gvardyeiskii Vintovka Polk of the 120.Gvardyeiskii Vintovka Divizeya advance..".

Hope some of you find this a little interesting

New Blood - by Michael Colbert

How often in any of the mailing lists or at club meetings do you hear the plaintive cry...we need more people...? Not just to add to the club's coffers, but to have more people to play with, enjoy arguments about rules interpretations, learn from and so on.

How often have you heard reasons for there not being more people involved?

- Work commitments,
- Family commitment's,
- Other hobby / interest practice,
- Study,
- Volunteer work.

How often have you seen / heard the same possible solutions to the above?

- Open days to advertise the group or club,
- Advertising in the local newspapers/university papers/for new members,
- Flyers in hobby shops,
- Talking with old school friends with common interests,
- Visits to local schools, fetes, conventions etc with demonstration games,
- Development of a website,
- Talk with members of university wargames clubs
- Talk with other wargames clubs, maybe there will be a cross interest develops,
- Demonstration games in local or central hobby / wargame stores.

Of all of these things, how often are they successful?? From my experiences so far, in SF clubs, at telephone counselling centres and in wargaming, the problem is always the same. It doesn't matter if we are talking about a hobby such as wargaming, or a vocation such as counselling, (where I might add the volunteers have a very strong motivator in gaining experience alongside their studies). You might ask yourself, what was one of the supporting reasons for the very old VWA (Victorian Wargames Association) to fold in the early '70's? It was minimal support from the club members as well as not enough passing trade.

As any small businessman will tell you, passing trade is where you make your money, at least in the first three years. What is needed is that 'passing trade', a public profile for ASL. This is one solution. Another possible solution is to find a celebrity to 'push' your particular cause. Whilst MMP in the U.S. has Curt, we also have at least one radio broadcaster / comedian who has an active interest in wargames, albeit DBM and the like. Are there any others that you know of?

Now there may be some of you who think, '...hey, this is a game I enjoy and I have no interest in doing anything in public.' That's fair enough, but if there are people who read this and want to get more involved in raising people's awareness of ASL or wargaming in general, maybe we should get together, see what is practical / achievable and more importantly, what is appropriate for the club we now have.

Book Review - by Michael Colbert

Barbarossa: *The Axis and the Allies*
 eds. Erickson J. & Dilks D.
 Edinburgh University Press 1994
 ISBN 0 7486 0504 5

As the closing remarks in the Preface state, "...the young and the old have combined here to present research, recollection and reflection on this tempest in world affairs." What follows in this book is based upon a conference held in 1991 and extended, as further information became available from Soviet records.

The work is divided into three sections;

Germany Turns East

The first part looks at Ribbentrop and the Soviet Union between 1937 - 1941,
The Yugoslav Coup d'Etat 27 March 1941,
British Intelligence and Barbarossa and
The German attack, the Soviet response

Strained Alliances, Flawed Strategies

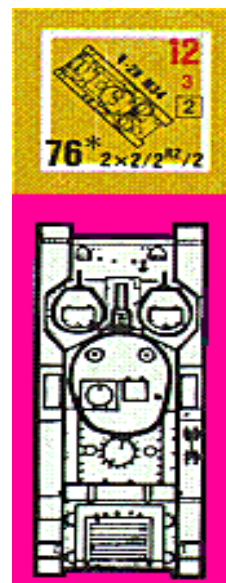
This second section reviews Allied Strategy in the wake of Barbarossa,
Barbarossa and the Soviet Leadership,
The collapse of Stalin's Diplomacy and Strategy,
The Imperial Japanese Navy and the North - South Dilemma,
Moscow 1941: The Turning Point

Conflict, Compromise & Cost

The final section includes The Brutalisation of Warfare, Nazi crimes
& the Wermacht,
The Hidden Dimension: Wartime Collaboration in the Soviet Union,
Soviet War Losses

For the wargamer there are some interesting areas for further research, including;

Collaboration and how the population reacted under German Military control,
Statistical losses of materiel eg tanks and SP Guns (possibly useful for campaign games)
Changes in Soviet Strategy and its effects on the battlefield
The Yugoslav Coup d'Etat in 1941



In summary, an interesting book that draws upon many authors to consider what might be characterised as peripheral issues for the wargamer. However, to the amateur military historians amongst us, it goes some way to 'filling out the corners' (a la Toluene). It also benefits from the contributors coming from different cultures and hence, varying perspectives. All in all, each of the works in this edition are objectively critical, at times questioning German, Soviet or Allied Records of events.

Currently Posted to Army Group South

Name Member No#

Bruce Probst	01	S. Banham	02	N. Andrews	03	C. Harding	04	Mick Jones	05
A. Rogers	06	David Bardi	07	M. Colbert	08	P. Sommerville	09	Steve Oxley	10
J. Westlake	11	Joe Moro	12	Geoff Morris	13	Steve Lessing	14	Keith Gillie	15
Chris Betts	16	Ian Bouch	17	Chris Carson	18	Kirk Meyer	19	A. Millar	20
Tim Reade	21	John Sawyer	22	G. Stokes	23	Ron Trainer	24	D. Webster	25

Club Meetings

Army Group South – meets monthly at the at the Ashburton Library 154 High Street Ashburton, Melbourne Victoria, from 1800 hours onwards. The Secretary usually sends out an e-mail the week prior notifying members of what the game (s) of the night will be, however, people who turn up are most welcome and every effort will be made to try and get these people involved in a game. So if you are interested in ASL and you are in the area, come along and meet the gang. Hope to see you there